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ABSTRACT

To increase a deep continuous stream of library research, the following steps are recommended: (1) expand present research activities in library schools, libraries, and professional associations; (2) add evaluative measures to library "demonstrations" set up as a part of state plans for library development; (3) sponsor experimental programs of library service on a state-wide or multi-state basis with evaluative techniques built in and (4) organize a large-scale program of research aimed at evaluation of library services. It is also recommended that a Federal Institute of Library and Information Science be established within the Office of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. The proposed institute would have several responsibilities: (1) conduct research into the changing needs of information users and the effectiveness of libraries and information systems meeting these needs, (2) undertake research, development, and prototype application of all types of new technology as they relate to library and information science activities and (3) assume the system engineering and technical direction responsibilities for the design and implementation of an integrated national library information system. (MF)

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/USA/

# RESEARCH IN LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE U.S.A.

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# RESEARCH IN LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES

It is difficult to describe the status of library research in the United States in any comprehensive way. No central office attempts to maintain a complete, up-to-date record of research activity. The latest summary by the Library Services Branch of the U. S. Office of Education covers the five-year period 1959-1964. During this period 902 projects were listed in the publication Library Research in Progress.[1] These include studies reported by individual researchers, library schools, professional associations and foundations. Although the editors aimed at comprehensive coverage, they undoubtedly missed many studies through failure of the researchers to report.

Analyzing these 902 projects the editors found that they fell into eight subject categories as follows:

| Category | Percent of all Studies |
|---|---|
| Background | 25% |
| Organization and administration | 21 |
| Technical processes | 20 |
| Resources | 12 |
| Personnel and training | 8 |
| Readers Services | 7 |
| International, comparative and foreign librarianship | 6 |
| Methods of research | 1 |
| | 100% |

The category "Background" includes such varied subjects as library philosophy and goals; the history of libraries, books and publishing; and the library as a social institution. The number of studies listed under "Organization and Administration" reflects the current concern with the processes of planning and evaluation at local, state, regional and national levels. The concentration of studies in the area of "Technical Processes" is due largely to the widespread

interest in the application of automation to library problems.

Two-thirds of the 902 research projects were found to be conducted by people in academic institutions. These included degree candidates (42%), library school faculty members (10%), other faculty members (8%), and college and university librarians (7%). The remainder of the projects were carried out by people in a variety of other agencies--federal and state government departments, public libraries, research organizations and library associations.

A total of $8,730,036 was invested in these 902 research projects, and more than half of this money came from the federal government. The amounts coming from various sources were as follows:

| Source | Amount Spent |
|---|---|
| Federal Government | $ 4,451,810 |
| Council on Library Resources | 2,941,872 |
| Other private foundations | 973,810 |
| Professional associations | 108,475 |
| State library agencies | 75,189 |
| Institutions of higher education | 40,400 |
| Miscellaneous | 128,480 |

The federal government total is made up of contributions from several agencies:

| | |
|---|---|
| National Science Foundation | $ 2,051,958 |
| U.S. Office of Education | 1,312,508 |
| National Institutes of Health | 536,668 |
| Department of Defense | 352,000 |
| Other federal government agencies | 208,676 |

What changes took place in this pattern between 1965 and 1970 can only be surmised in the absence of any similar analysis by the Office of Education. Since the amount of federal money available for library research

increased, presumably more research projects were undertaken. Interest in library automation and interlibrary cooperation increased, leading undoubtedly to the popularity of research projects in these areas. Library school enrollments rose, and more students were trained in research techniques, particularly in those schools offering the doctorate. At the same time commercial research organizations such as the Nelson Associates in New York and the System Development Corporation in California entered the library research field and obtained major research contracts.

Reflecting the growing interest in library research during the past 15 years and contributing to the progress made during this period were a number of developments which deserve mention: 1) the establishment of the Council on Library Resources, 2) the availability of federal funds for library and information science research, 3) the creation of library research institutes by a number of universities, 4) the establishment of an Office of Research and Development by the American Library Association, and 5) the activity of the federal government in disseminating information about research activities.

The Council on Library Resources was established in 1956 by the Ford Foundation "to aid in the solution of library problems." Starting out with a grant of $5 million the Council received another $8 million from the foundation in 1960 and an additional $5 million in 1968. In its first ten years of operation the Council awarded 346 grants totaling approximately $8.5 million. Projects financed by the Council have covered a wide range of problems including paper deterioration; library automation; testing and standardization

of supplies, equipment and systems; interlibrary cooperation; cataloging; and university library management. International library relations has been a special interest of the Council, and a former IFLA President (Sir Frank Francis) now serves as the Council's Consultant on Foreign Library Developments Through the support of the Council on Library Resources library research in the United States has been encouraged, problems in need of study have been identified, and partial or complete solutions have been found for some of them.[2]

Recognition by the federal government of the importance of library research was one of the most significant development in the field in the 1960's. Various federal agencies funded research programs, e.g., the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, the National Science Foundation, the National Library of Medicine, and the U. S. Army Engineers. The program of broadest interest is that set up under Title II B of the Higher Education Act of 1965.[3] This title authorized the U. S. Office of Education to establish a Library and Information Science Research Program. Applications for grants under this Program could be submitted by school districts, colleges, universities, state governments, and other public or private non-profit agencies. Two types of projects could be supported: small projects under $10,000 and larger projects in excess of $10,000. Small project support was designed to facilitate exploratory research, hypothesis generation and theory building, analysis of existing data or pilot studies which may serve as the first stage of a larger research or demonstration activity. Applications for small project support are administered through the Office of Education regional offices and can be funded with minimum delay. Projects in excess of $10,000 must be approved by the Office of Education staff in Washington. Applications for research

under this program are accepted for problems in a number of areas:

1. Education: the techniques, philosophy and scope of training and education for librarianship.

2. Use and users: information and reader services, goals for different kinds of users, variations in user patterns.

3. Organization of library and information services: administration, personnel, finance, and governmental relations.

4. Role of libraries and information centers in society.

5. Integration of library services in school and academic instructional programs.

6. Control of resources, through such means as indexing, classification, or abstracting; network and system planning.

7. Library technology, including physical access, reprography, and automation.

During the three-year period 1967-1969 Congress appropriated $10,100,000 for this Program. Ninety-eight projects were funded at a total cost of $8,396,258. Among projects supported were the development of an information storage and retrieval system for biological and geological data, the bibliographic automation of large library operations using a time-sharing system, the identification of manpower requirements in the library and information professions, and the construction of a decision-making model for library network implementation in the State of Washington. Of the 98 grants 57 were made to university and college agencies (including libraries, library schools and library research institutes), 25 to non-profit organizations and 9 to commercial research firms. The remainder went to a variety of instituions including a public library, a city school district, a government

agency. It is anticipated that $2.2 million will be available for grants under this Program in both 1970 and 1971.[4]

Another significant development of the 1960's was the establishment of library research centers at a number of universities, e.g., Illinois (1961), Western Reserve (1955), California (1963), Pittsburgh (1962). These centers were created as adjuncts to graduate library schools with the aim of focusing attention on applied research, recruiting staff with research capabilities, providing an atmosphere in which the conduct of research is the primary objective, and attracting funds from various granting agencies. To take one example, the Library Research Center at The Graduate School of Library Science, University of Illinois was started with an initial grant from the Illinois State Library out of its Library Services Act (federal) funds. Its original purpose was to carry out research studies on public library development problems in rural areas. Subsequently it has engaged in applied research on many kinds of library problems for a variety of sponsors. Along with its contribution to the solution of professional problems the Center has provided research experience to students in the Library School.[5]

The interest of the American Library Association in research has been expressed through the establishment of a Committee on Research, an Office of Research and Development, and a Library Research Round Table. The Committee on Research is charged with responsibility for identifying research needs, for coordinating research activities of the Association, and for recommending general program, policy and priority on matters pertaining to

research. It is expected to recommend procedures within the American Library Association to govern the expeditious consideration of all research projects for presentation to the Executive Board; to advise the Executive Board on library research and development; to encourage and stimulate studies pertinent to the different types of libraries and in the several fields of library service; to encourage the establishment of divisional committees for the purpose of stimulating research; to maintain liaison with all units of the Association to insure a two-way flow of information and communication on research. In addition to this main committee, most divisions of the Association have created their own research committees.

The Office of Research and Development was established at the ALA Headquarters in 1965. Its objectives were: (1) the advancement of the theory, methods, and principles of library and information science, (2) the development of, as opposed to research on, library and information resources and services, and (3) the improvement of library education, manpower, recruitment and utilization. Its role in research was understood to be instigative and catalytic rather than operational in the sense of conducting research projects. The primary function of the Office of Research and Development has been in evaluating research proposals coming from ALA divisions and committees, securing funds to undertake projects, and locating the proper agency to perform the actual research. The Office has been handicapped by shortage of staff to monitor the research projects which have been undertaken or to carry out the other objectives for which it was created.

The Library Research Round Table was established in 1968 "to contribute toward the extension and improvement of library research; to provide public program opportunities for describing and criticizing library research projects

and for disseminating their findings; to orient and educate ALA members concerning research techniques and their usefulness in obtaining information with which to reach administrative decisions and solve problems." The chief activity of the Round Table is sponsoring meetings at conferences of the American Library Association.[6]

A final development worth noting is the creation by the federal government of a system for disseminating information about library research. The first step in this direction was the publication by the Library Services Branch of the U. S. Office of Education of Library Research in Progress. This monthly listing of research projects was issued from 1959 through 1964. In 1966 the Office of Education inaugurated the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) to make the results of educational research available on an up-to-date basis at nominal cost. In addition to a central office in Washington, D. C., there is a network of 21 clearinghouses throughout the country. The ERIC Clearinghouse for Library and Information Sciences located at the American Society for Information Science in Washington, D. C. collects and abstracts reports of studies in the field on a comprehensive basis. Documents acquired by this and the other 20 clearinghouses in the ERIC system are abstracted in Research in Education which is published monthly by the Government Printing Office. Copies of most of the documents listed may be obtained from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service in either microfiche or hard copy.

In spite of the progress made since 1955 many librarians feel that library research in the United States exhibits serious shortcomings. These

alleged shortcomings involve the amount of research done, the quality of the work, the lack of attention to certain major problems, and the absence of planning and coordination.

It is apparent that the total amount of research carried on is inadequate to the needs of the profession. Libraries of all kinds are faced with the urgent need to adapt their services to rapidly changing conditions in American society. Yet they lack the data to make intelligent decisions about alternative courses of action. Research could remedy this situation, but too little of it is done. Why? Various reasons have been mentioned. Busy librarians lack time for research. Many of them are not sensitive to research needs and possibilities. Library schools have not trained their students in research techniques or encouraged them to cultivate a critical attitude toward their work. Library administrators discourage staff members from raising questions about accepted practices. Funds for support of research are insufficient. All these factors undoubtedly contribute to the problem.

Writing in 1967 a library school faculty member (Professor Philip Ennis of the University of Chicago Graduate Library School) characterized library research in the United States as "noncumulative, fragmentary, generally weak and relentlessly oriented to immediate practice."[7] In amplification of his criticism he pointed out that good research studies are often ignored rather than being used as a basis for further research; in the absence of continuing work on major problems it is impossible to build up a body of generalized knowledge in any area. The fragmentary nature of current

research is illustrated, in his opinion, by reference to the library survey. Many surveys are conducted to assess strengths and weaknesses of library programs, but each survey is carried out in isolation. Since surveys differ in content and method, there can be no comparisons among libraries and no general understanding of how and why libraries vary in their resources and services.

The same critic feels that many studies are too poorly done to yield useful results. Common defects are unsatisfactory sampling techniques, under-conceptualized study designs, primitive measuring instruments, and studies conducted on too small a scale to permit generalization. These criticisms reflect inadequacies in the training and competence of those undertaking research in the field. The criticism that research is too much oriented to immediate, practical needs is one on which not all librarians agree. Some feel that applied research is exactly what is needed, and that unless studies focus on specific problem situations they are of limited value. Others believe that basic research is what the profession needs most, and that preoccupation with immediate concerns will not yield solutions to long-range problems. The answer is, presumably that both kinds of research are needed and should be encouraged.

Some advocates of basic research believe that the profession of librarianship simply does not have at the present time sufficient research capacity to permit rapid expansion of research activities and, will therefore, have to rely upon the social sciences for experienced personnel. This presents

difficulties because the social scientists are preoccupied with other research concerns and because they are normally not interested in the kind of studies of operations and analyses of particular institutions that many librarians think should be done.

Some critics of the present status of library research believe that library schools are not contributing to the field as they should. Many of the schools apparently attach little importance to research; only a handful of the accredited schools offer the doctorate. A large proportion of the studies undertaken by library school students, moreover, are historical or bibliographical and alledgedly contribute little to an understanding of current problems. Many library educators believe, however, that the schools should not be expected to carry the burden of doing research for the profession. The most to be expected of them is stimulation and training of students. Dissertations, they feel, should be regarded not so much as contributions to knowledge as instruments for training in research methods.

Proposals for improving the status of library research have come from several sources--the American Library Association, library schools, social scientists and the National Advisory Commission on Libraries. At the insistence of large numbers of its members the American Library Association is re-examining its entire structure and program with the assistance of a high-level group called the "Activities Committee on New Directions for ALA." This Committee has recognized the importance of library research and has recommended that the American Library Association assume a more active role

in this area.[8] To quote from the Committee's Final Report:

> "Much research on the problems of effective library service must be conducted during the next two decades. The ALA must assume a role of positive leadership in this area. In particular, ALA should assume the functions of (a) establishing priorities for research, (b) soliciting funds for conducting significant research proposals, (c) evaluating prospective agencies and individuals to carry out these proposals, (d) monitoring the studies while in process; and (e) evaluating and distributing the results.
>
> The Committee recommends that the essential role of planning and research in the Association's responsibilities be recognized by the following:
>
> 1) The Office of Research and Development should be expanded with additional staff having special competence in the area of research. This would enable ALA to take an active role of leadership in the development of research in Library Science.
>
> 2) The present Library Research Round Table should be expanded to become a Round Table on Planning and Research in order to give libraries concerned with both of these activities an opportunity for interaction.
>
> 3) Long-range studies should be made of the feasibility of further expanding the Office of Research and Development to include staff to actually perform some research at ALA headquarters.

In a similar vein the Council of the American Library Association at its meeting in Detroit in June, 1970 adopted a statement of policy on Library Education and Manpower which included the following admonition to library schools: "Research has an important role to play in the educational process as a source of new knowledge both for the field of librarianship in general and for library education in particular. In its planning, budgeting, and organizational design, the library school should recognize research, both

theoretical and applied, as an imperative responsibility."

As long ago as 1948 Bernard Berelson, then Dean of the Chicago Graduate Library School, made several important suggestions for improving the state of library research. He advocated more planning of research programs as a corrective for the excessively fragmentary nature of research activity; this could be achieved, he felt, by having library school faculties prepare general statements of long-range research programs within which framework students and faculty could work on specific interrelated research projects. He also urged the appointment of full-time research associates in library schools and the establishment of a "research service bureau" at the American Library Association headquarters.

More recently Professor Philip Ennis, the critic of library research quoted above, has made a number of suggestions for improvement: (1) library educators and administrators must develop a greater commitment to research. This means presumably that they must devote more time and money to the encouragement of research in their own institutions; (2) library schools must recruit researchers and build research programs. In selecting faculty members they must appoint not only librarians interested in research but also non-library specialists who are willing to share academic chairs in their own fields of psychology, linguistics, economics, sociology, and information science with a library commitment; (3) library schools must concentrate on basic research and resist pressures to service the profession by devising solutions to immediate problems; (4) provide personnel in school and public libraries

and in large library systems who are trained and committed to research at the operational level; (5) organize seminars of a month's duration or longer bringing together senior library administrators and researchers to discuss specific topics (the INTREX conference sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a good example); (6) concentrate on a program of basic research devoted to problems in three general areas: (a) measurement of library performances, (b) the users of print, and (c) the organization of knowledge.

A third group of proposals came out of a seminar held at Rutgers University in 1964-65 in which practicing librarians, social scientists and library school faculty members met to discuss research on library service in metropolitan areas.[9] The group recognized that "there is no deep, continuous stream of scholarship in this profession." To increase research activity the following steps were suggested: (1) Set as a major goal the expansion of present research activity in library schools, libraries and professional associations, (2) add evaluative measures to library "demonstrations" set up as a part of state plans for library development, (3) sponsor experimental programs of library service on a state-wide or multi-state basis with evaluative techniques built in, (4) organize a large-scale program of research aimed at evaluation of library service; under the direction of a social scientist experienced in research, with an advisory group of researchers from such disciplines as education, planning, sociology, political science, history and economics, this program should extend over a five year period and result in six or eight publications; liaison with the library profession should be maintained by means of seminars of 25 librarians from various segments of the profession meeting with the social scientists every two or three months.

The National Advisory Commission on Libraries was established by the President in 1965 to study the role of libraries in American society and to recommend ways of improving library service. In its report, presented in 1968, the Commission recognized research as one of the principal ways in which the level of library service can be raised. One of its five recommendations is the "establishment of a Federal Institute of Library and Information Science as a principal center for basic and applied research in all relevant areas."[10]

The proposed Institute would have several reponsibilities: (1) conduct research into the changing needs of information users and the effectiveness of libraries and information systems in meeting these needs, (2) undertake research, development, and prototype application of all types of new technology as they relate to library and information science activities, and (3) assume the system engineering and technical direction responsibilities for the design and implementation of an integrated national library and information system. Its program, according to the Commission, should be built on a foundation of basic research efforts directed toward better tools for the analysis of library and information requirements, quantitative measures for judging the value of existing systems and services, and an understanding of the relative value of various information transfer media and of the role of interactive systems.

Supported by such basic investigations, the major research and development activities of the program should aim to improve library work through: (1) applications of new technology for purposes of saving labor, improving speed and accuracy, maximizing convenience and dependability,

reducing costs, and performing tasks previously impossible, (2) more effective devices for organizing, storing, transmitting, displaying, and copying information; (3) more effective organization of manpower and service units; (4) better understanding of the theoretical foundations of library work and of the storage, organization, and communication of knowledge, (5) understanding, based on comprehensive studies of both users and non-users of libraries, of their library requirements and also of the reasons for non-use; and (6) the resolution of legal problems, such as those relating to the photocopying of copyrighted material.

It is recommended that the new Institute be established within the Office of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.

## FOOTNOTES


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